Eucalyptus Trees Spoiling Soil

2108. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Eucalyptus trees spoil the surrounding soil; and

(b) if so, the action taken to prohibit its planting in urban areas?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI TR. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Forest Cover in N.E.R.

2109. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the present area under forest cover in the whole of N.E. Region;

(b) whether it is upto the required need; and

(c) what are the plans and projects of the Ministry to bring it closer to standard level of forest cover in the Region?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI TR. BAALU): (a) As per State of Forest Report, 1999, the total forest cover in the N.E. Region is 1,63,799 sq.km, which is about 64% of the geographical area.

(b) The National Forest Policy, 1988 stipulates that the national goal should be to have a minimum of one-third of total land area of the country under forest or tree cover. In the hills and in mountainous regions, the aim should be to maintain two third of the area under such cover. North-eastern Region comes under the second category where we should have two-third area under tree/forest cover.

(c) Details of the plans to bring it closer to the national goal laid down under National Forest Policy, 1988 of the Govemment of India are:

(i) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State Governments/ UT Administrations from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Govemment of India.

(ii) Guidelines have been issued to all States/UTs to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iii) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes.

(iv) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(v) Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared a National Forestry Action Programme to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through increased investments in conservation and development of forest resources.

(vi) There is earmarking of plan budget for North Eastern Region.

Viability of eco-tourism

2110. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "Is eco-tourism economically viable in India", appearing in The Times of India dated 23rd February, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government would undertake a study on the possibility of economic viability of eco- tourism in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI TR. BAALU): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The objective of eco-tourism is to create greater awareness about importance of natural ecosystem and the need for preserving the same. Eco-tourism has to be a low key affair under which economic benefits accrue to the local communities, and their dependence on forest produce from National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries is minimised. Economic viability cannot be a sole criteria for success of eco-tourism. Wildlife Institute of India has carried out several studies/workshops to develop perspective plans which address economical, social and environmental concerns of eco-tourism.